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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A WESTERN WOMAN'S VIEW OF THE ELECTION

SIR,—The primary causes of Republican defeat in the National Election are very apparent. The fundamental and most significant is the regeneration of our democracy, which is now in process. There is a general quickening of the public conscience; a realization of a civic duty, the performance of which requires independent and individual thinking. Never in the history of our country have the common people been so filled with the determination to subserve and promote the general welfare, ultimately the individual welfare, through the judicious use of the ballot as now.

Another reason, purely psychological, and characteristic of the American people, is the manner in which we change our viewpoint. Adverse criticism, even though justified, is extremely unpopular at the present time. The electorate will have none of it, and almost invariably the majority express their disapproval by casting their votes for the down-trodden candidate.

A few years ago the pendulum of public opinion swung almost, if not quite, to the danger point of muck-raking. Just now, we are swinging to the opposite direction, and probably in another four years we shall have swung back to the normal point. We shall not muck-rake, neither shall we ignore the salutary effect of constructive criticism, and we shall temper judgment accordingly.

To prove the danger of either extreme I need give but a few specific instances that have come under my observation. Mr. Brown was clerk of the school board in a little country district of the West. Brown was thoroughly honest, conscientious; public spirited, and a tireless worker. His fellow board members, over his protest, voted to pay him \$5.00 per month for his services as clerk of the board. This money Mr. Brown used in giving prizes for debates and school improvements; oftentimes the \$5.00 was not sufficient, and he would make up the deficit himself. This was during the muck-raking period, and the good people of the district were confident that Brown was "grafting" the district or he could not be spending so much money. Hence, Brown's resignation was demanded by a petition signed by almost the entire population. In November, 1916, these same neighbors vindicated him by an overwhelming vote for a much higher office.

Now for the anti-criticism period through which we are now passing. In one of the Western States, two high State officials—one a Democrat and the other a Republican—had just been re-elected by large pluralities, despite the alleged fact that both had grossly violated the law in the expenditure of State funds. The charges were made and proof offered in the case of the Republican official. The press of the State, being Republican, suppressed all facts and criticism; the opposition, not to be

outdone, flooded the State with circulars, setting forth clearly the incompetence of the official and alleging wilful violation of the law. In the case of the Democratic official the papers were filled with denunciation of him and of how he had violated the law of the State. Proof was produced of this violation and he made no denial. What was the result in these two instances? The majority of the people refused even to consider the charges, and both officials, each representing one of the two great parties, were re-elected by an overwhelming plurality.

The people of the West were for the same reason indifferent to the criticisms of the National Administration. Furthermore, we are enjoying peace and prosperity, and unless we can be convinced beyond a doubt that we are on the verge of some dire tragedy, we prefer not to risk a change.

As is always the case in elections, there were many contributing causes to defeat. While not so fundamental as those I have mentioned, they are nevertheless important. Chief among these is the indisputable fact that the Republican and Progressive parties are not united in the West. The stand-pat Republican leaders cordially welcomed the wayward Progressives into the G. O. P. fold, provided the prodigals would not assert themselves and would humbly follow the old leaders and acquiesce in the old machine method of control.

Another deterrent influence was the invasion of the West by the Woman's Party. This proved a boomerang. The general feeling prevailed among the women of the West that Mr. Hughes was not sincere in his position on woman suffrage; that having been in a position to assist materially the Eastern women in the suffrage cause, and not having done so, his purpose in espousing the cause at this time was merely to get votes. This feeling was intensified by the statement in the press contributed by Mr. Hughes, that he reserved the right to withdraw his support to the suffrage amendment if in his judgment it were the greater wisdom. With this string attached, his position on suffrage did not ring true to the average Western woman, who is quick to sense a political play, since she herself has considerable political sagacity and is something of an adept in political tactics. Furthermore, there was a feeling that the Congressional party had stultified its cause by permitting itself to further the political aspirations of any candidate—apparently the election of a candidate had become paramount to the cause of suffrage.

Still another contributing cause to Republican defeat was over-advertising. The people became satiated with it weeks before the election. It is my belief that the advertisements in the newspapers and magazines of the two weeks preceding election were not read by more than 10 per cent. of the voters, and most of these dismissed it from minds as soon as read. And last of all, the people of the West wanted Theodore Roosevelt.

But in the quiet that follows the election we are called to the fact that politics is not all of citizenship, but only one of its dramatic crises. The work of citizenship is quiet and obscure, and that of good citizenship is dictated by principle, and is free from partisanship and prejudice. Society rests in the main upon the emphasis of common interests rather than individual or party differences.

We are all now behind our President, and here's greeting from the Pacific Coast to Woodrow Wilson.

A REPUBLICAN WOMAN.

NORTH YAKIMA, WASH.